

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Schmit moves to raise LB 602 from committee pursuant to Rule 3, Section 10b. That motion can be found on page 1127 of the Legislative Journal.

PRESIDENT: Senator Schmit, could you advise the Chair. There is a half hour allocated. Did the Speaker allocate any particular amount of time to your motion?

SENATOR SCHMIT: I assume he would probably give us all 10 minutes apiece. There are three motions there. I won't burden the body with a lot of time on it. Unless they want to drag it out. I think I can explain it very rapidly. If I have your permission I'll proceed to do that. Mr. President and members of the Legislature, I recognize the overwhelming odds against the success of this motion today because of the absence of many of our colleagues. But I do want to take this opportunity to attempt to bring to the attention of the Legislature a very serious effect of the action of the Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha by their activity that is now taking place in Saunders County, Nebraska. The MUD has all ready acquired and seeks to acquire additional land for the purpose of establishing a well field in Saunders County. The adverse impact upon Saunders County is not well documented but we are certain that it will do these things. First of all it will erode the tax base of Saunders County, the Yutan school district, the natural resources district and the county itself. It will also erode the tax base of the various other subdivisions of government--the fire district, etc. that depend upon that area for support. We are also not certain as to what the effect will be in the future of the withdrawal of large volumes of water from the immediate area. I think that there are conflicting studies regarding whether or not it will have an adverse effect. The best information we have is this--if the Platte River remains wet they can pump there at the rate of 60 million gallons per day for a period of two weeks without having any adverse effect or any serious withdrawal of the underground water supply. One thing that is certain, we have discussed on this floor, last session, Senator Cope's bill which had to do with protecting the sovereignty of one subdivision of government against invasion by another. There are many arguments that you have heard relative to the fact that the City of Omaha and the Metropolitan Utilities District need this water. They have advanced the argument that it will cost an additional 50 cents to 1 dollar per capita to secure the water from the Missouri River. In these days when we hear a lot of conversation about conservation of water it seems to me to be reasonable that we try to utilize existing sources of water wherever possible that might otherwise be lost to this state before we tap the underground. The basic principle of this bill is this--to protect a small area, a lesser populated area, against an invasion by an institution, a subdivision which admittedly is much larger and much more powerful than is Saunders County. I know there are some serious questions in regard to what effect this will have upon other zoning jurisdictions, what effect it will have upon the municipalities, etc. But I think that the time needs to come when we address the issue as we see it here today. The issue as I see it is one of whether or not Saunders County must continually be fair game, so to speak, for a very friendly but very big neighbor to the East. It is not an attempt by myself nor by Saunders County to limit or to deny to the citizens of Omaha adequate water for their use. There is adequate water within the confines of Douglas County. There is surface water available from the Missouri River. There is adequate underground water in